Press Release: WWII Hero Major James J. O'Donovan's Remains Identified After 83 Years.

After 83 years, the remains of WWII hero Major James J. O'Donovan have been identified through DNA analysis by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). O'Donovan, a native of Cohoes, NY, will be returned to his family in San Diego for burial with full military honors.

Born in Cohoes, NY, Major O'Donovan was educated at La Salle Institute in Troy, where he later taught as a professor of Military Science and Tactics from 1936 to 1941. He was actively involved with the New York National Guard and the Reserve Army before being called to full-time service in January 1941. Deploying to the Philippines with an uncertain fate ahead, Major O'Donovan's departure was a heart-wrenching farewell to his wife, Evelyn, and their five children. It was the last time they would see him.

During the Battle of Bataan, O'Donovan served as the Executive Officer of the 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment. His leadership was marked by courage and effectiveness, earning him multiple awards and wide praise for leading a stubborn defense against the invading Japanese Army. Despite their efforts, the resistance lasted for five grueling months before O'Donovan and his men were captured. They were then subjected to the harrowing ordeal of the Bataan Death March. Tragically, six months later, Major O'Donovan succumbed to beriberi in the Cabanatuan prison camp.

After the war, the US Army retrieved what were believed to be Major O'Donovan's remains, but they could not definitively confirm his identity at the time. Consequently, since 1952, his presumed remains have rested in the Manila American Cemetery under a marker inscribed with "Known but to God."

In early 2018, O'Donovan's family reached out to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) to seek disinterment and DNA testing of the remains thought to be Major O'Donovan's. The remains were disinterred in late 2019 and brought to Hawaii, for identification. The news of Major O'Donovan's identification has finally come, fulfilling the most fervent hopes of his children and their many offspring. The funeral is set for mid-April.

James J O'Donovan

Previous Burial Location In Manila, PI

MAJ O'Donovan Awards

REF:

- James J O'Donovan Memorial Webpage - A large collection of materials and history related to MAJ O'Donovan.
  - https://sites.google.com/view/major-james-j-odonovan/home
- DPAA, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
  - https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaProfile?id=a0Jt0000000Llg8EAC
- Historical Context document written by DPAA
  - http://www.dpaa.mil/Portals/85/Documents/Reports/U.S.Casualties_Burials_Cabanatuan_POWCamp1.pdf?ver=2017-05-08-162357-013